

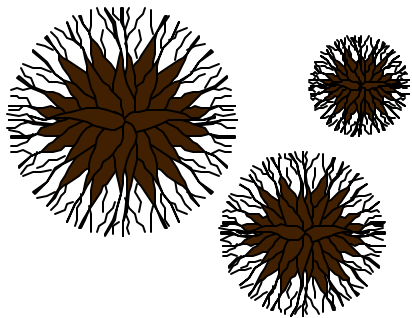
Many people consider mold an inconvenience in a wet basement or poorly ventilated bathroom. But molds can be much more than just an inconvenience—they can affect the health of you and your house. Here are some frequently asked questions and their answers.

What is mold?

Molds are microscopic fungi, which are neither plants nor animals. In nature, molds use enzymes to eat dead plants and animals. If there is a moist environment and other proper conditions, molds can attack materials in a house or building such as fiberboard, drywall, carpet backing, paper, dust, wood, or exposed soils in crawlspaces. Once established in a building, molds/fungi can spread, destroying structural wood components, and can be hard to get rid of.

Why is mold hazardous?

Molds use tiny spores to reproduce. Spores that become airborne are hard to filter out and can stay suspended in the air for long periods of time.



The spores can then be easily inhaled, causing the following symptoms:

- **headaches and/or fever**
- **coughing, wheezing**
- **runny nose/sinus problems**
- **ongoing flu-like symptoms**
- **skin rashes**
- **diarrhea**
- **hypersensitivity, pneumonitis, asthma, or other immune responses**

A few mold species are capable of producing toxins if a proper food source is available. People vary in their sensitivity to the concentration of spores in the air. The elderly, children, and people with compromised immune systems are most vulnerable to the effects of spores, but even healthy people may react to high concentrations.

How do I prevent mold?

As part of routine maintenance, buildings should be checked for evidence of water damage and visible mold. Conditions that can cause mold (water leaks, flooding, high humidity, condensation) should be corrected.

Is there mold in my house?

For mold to grow, it needs moisture and a food source. The following are conditions where indoor mold growth can occur:

- Flooding without proper cleanup
- Rainfall through leaky roofs
- Plumbing or waterline leaks

- Persistent elevated relative humidity above 60%

If you can see visible mold growth or smell musty odors, then you probably have mold growing in your home.

Should I test for mold?

Testing is expensive and sometimes unreliable because molds are naturally present in the outdoor environment. If you can see it or smell it, you've probably got mold in your house. Unless it is for legal or insurance purposes, testing/sampling for mold isn't recommended.

How do I clean-up?

For any mold problem, the moisture source needs to be eliminated first. Air circulation and increased light may also reduce mold growth. If the contaminated area is **approximately less than 2 square feet**:

- Wear personal protective gear such as gloves, and only individuals who are free from allergy, asthma, and immune disorders should clean the area.
- Contaminated porous materials should be placed in a sealed plastic bag before disposing outside the building to prevent further contamination.
- Wash all remaining non-absorbent surfaces and surrounding areas with 10% bleach solution (1.5 cups/1 gallon water) and let the area sit for 15 minutes. Rinse with water and allow thorough drying.

If an area of mold is **approximately between 2 and 30 square feet**:

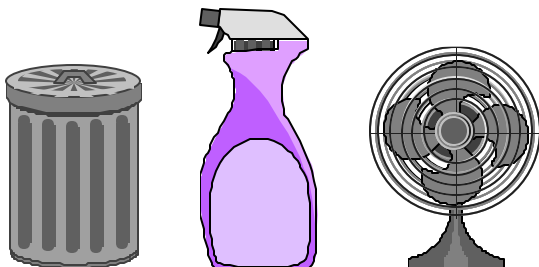
- Using the same procedure as the 2 sq. ft. case, take the additional precaution of covering the contaminated material with plastic sheets and tape before removing or handling the material. Then seal the material in a plastic bag before carrying it through the rest of the building.

If the area of mold is **more than 30 square feet** or is **in an HVAC system**:

- Personnel experienced in mold clean-up and disinfection or in handling of hazardous materials (such as asbestos) are necessary.

Porous materials such as wood, carpet, or fiberboard should be discarded if contaminated because they may harbor spores. Only nonporous materials such as glass, plastic, or metal can be kept after they are cleaned and disinfected.

A licensed contractor or water remediation specialist may need to be contacted if you feel cleaning a small test patch adversely affected your health.



Who do I contact for more information?

For questions regarding mold and indoor air quality, contact:

**Nebraska Health and Human Services
System
Indoor Air Quality Program
P.O. Box 95007
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-0594**

**Cooperative Extension
Room 205 Home Economics
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68583-0804
(402) 472-6319**

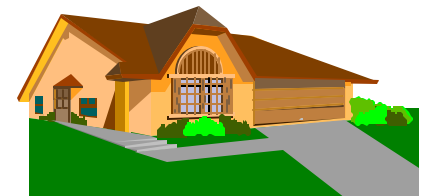
**Douglas County Health Department
Environmental Health Division
1819 Farnam St.
Omaha, NE 68183
(402) 444-7486**

**Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department
3140 N Street
Lincoln, NE 68510-1514
(402) 441-8000**

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Is Mold Affecting Your Health?

Mold and Indoor Air Quality



Nebraska Department of
Health and Human Services
Regulation and Licensure
Indoor Air Quality Program

